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ABSTRACT

The amount of paperwork in teaching often seems overwhelming. This being the case, organization is essential for effective teaching. Several ideas for dealing with paper flow are useful. Box file folders or durable plastic file cases, plus an ample supply of file folders, are excellent for storing papers. Papers used in a particular class can be categorized into helpful categories: attendance; grades; handouts; plans for the next class meeting; materials that must be returned to students; class roster; papers to be graded; and course syllabus. Temporary files can be created for particular projects. Personal files for each individual student might also prove helpful. (MM)

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Strategies for Keeping Papers Organized

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The amount of paperwork in teaching often seems overwhelming. Just trying to keep up with massive amounts of students' work can cause considerable stress. Further, papers can easily get misplaced. Paper flow is often tremendous in reading classes, especially where students write essays in response to questions evaluating comprehensive and eliciting opinions. Recent emphasis on essay writing, especially in secondary schools and colleges, adds tremendously to the problem of controlling paper flow.

Organization is essential for effective teaching. Great amounts of time and energy can be lost just wrestling, both mentally and physically, with papers completed by students. There is never enough time in teaching to do everything one wants to accomplish so time unnecessarily lost in paper shuffling is a great waste both to teachers and instructors. Efficient paper flow frees teachers for creative and productive endeavors and provides quick feedback for students. Perhaps even more important, teachers can provide more opportunities for students to write since they are better able to deal with work produced. Some ideas for dealing with paper flow are presented below.

Start by getting several box file folders about two inches (five cm) deep in letter and/or legal size. Durable plastic file cases are also excellent. These are usually about 10 inches high (26 cm) and four inches deep (8 cm) and come with a lid and handle for ease in carrying. The next step is to get ample supply of file folders. Then make a listing of categories for papers used in a particular class. Examples of especially helpful designations are presented below:

1. Attendance: This file folder contains class notes with each date that class meets so that attendance can be checked easily during each class session. Student information cards including address, phone number, year, special organizations (sports, choir, etc.), are also kept on each student. The information cards are especially helpful for dealing with students with excessive absences. A quick note can be sent to the students themselves and/or to school counselors.

2. Grades: Keep all records of grades in this file. Use a copy of the class roster with large, easy to read listings of names with plenty of space for recording information. Overall grades can be listed on one form while other grade records can be kept with sub-scores or partial grades. For example, students might be keeping a vocabulary notebook throughout a term. Progress reports (or grades) might be given at intervals during the term. Progress reports (or grades) might be given at intervals during the term. These interval grades can be kept separate from the comprehensive grade roster that will eventually be used in determining final grades. Also, records might be kept on an exam concerning how students scored on particular sections. In light of extra security, it is beneficial, especially near the end of a term, to make a photo-copy of the overall grade record sheet and store it separately from the class file.

3. Handouts: Keep at least one copy of every paper presented to students. This helps determine if handouts were, in fact,

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given out and provides a ready source when and/or if other copies are needed.

4. Next Class: Plans for next class include instructional materials, announcements, and notices for particular students. The instructor should have all the required information for conducting the next class in this folder. It's a real confidence builder knowing that the "next class" folder is complete.

5. Return: Materials that need to go to students are kept in this file. For example, the instructor can consult the attendance roster, put names of absent students on handouts, and then place them in the "return" folder. At the next class meeting, students can receive materials missed. Also, as soon as papers have been scored (from the "score"folder), recorded in the "grades" folder, they can be put in the "return" folder.

6. Roster: Several blank student rosters are stored in this file. Make initial copies on white 8½" (22 cm) by 11" (28 cm) paper. Use a fairly heavy felt pen and clearly print names, last name first in alphabetical order. A space of one half inch (1½ cm) provides ample space for recording names. About 20 names per sheet can be recorded, most classes will require two sheets. Make columns of half inch boxes to the left of the names. Leave the top of each column blank; information can be added later depending on needs. Rosters can be photo-copied on colored paper to help keep rosters of different classes easily distinguishable from each other. Whatever general designating information is needed can be put on the upper part of the front page.

7. Score: Papers to score are placed in this folder along with answer keys. The folder can be given to a teacher aide who, when familiar with the procedures used, can (1) score material, (2) record grades, and (3) place papers in the "return" file. A note might be put in the "next class" file concerning comments and disposition of the papers. For example: "See Proj. 3 papers in return file - 1st 10 minutes for return and comments.

8. Syllabus: A written account of goals, objectives, and expectations for teachers and students is always available in this file. If a class calendar is used, this can also be kept in this file. The calendar lists days when class meets, a time frame for accomplishing tasks, dates of tests and due dates on projects, etc. Copies might also be kept in the "handouts" file since the syllabus and calendar are usually provided to all the students. It is also helpful to tape a copy of the calendar on the front of the "grades" folder. A helpful option, is to list test and project dates and the relative value of each regarding grades (or points).

Temporary files can be created for particular projects. For example, students required to keep records during an independent sustained silent reading project finish at various times. A file labeled **SSR** can be used to store the record sheets as the project progresses and the instructor is ready to act on the material.

Personal files for each individual student might prove very helpful. For example, the instructor who wants to keep a series of essays produced by students can file them in each student's file folder. Teachers who see the need of a substantial amount of writing instruction might have students write frequently in class. Papers can be gathered and given to a teacher aide for placement in students' personal file folders. The instructor can look at the file folder for a specific or wholistic appraisal of several writings at one time. Also, folders can be occasionally returned to students so that they can evaluate their own work and, thus become increasingly involved in their own learning. Keeping files for each student of course, necessitates using a durable filing case.

Summary

Organizing paper flow is essential for effectiveness and efficiency. A key is to take time as soon as possible after a particular class to re-establish order if needed. The procedures described herein can be modified to fit a wide variety of circumstances. Once using a paper flow system, insights for increased efficiency readily occur. Teacher aides can be easily taught to provide substantial support in maintaining paper flow. The greatest benefit is in freeing creative talents and energy of teachers for more productive activities. Take the time to tame the paper tiger!